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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED

Syria

Foreign ministers discussed the situation in Syria, ahead of the Brussels Conference on Supporting the future of Syria and the region on 4-5 April 2017. The Council adopted conclusions on an EU strategy for Syria:

"1. Recalling the Council Conclusions of 23 May and 17 October 2016 and the European Council Conclusions of 15 December 2016, the Council is appalled by the continuing dire situation in Syria and the persistent humanitarian, security and political issues arising from the conflict. 13.5 million Syrians are now in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria including 6.3 million internally displaced, 1.5 million living under siege conditions, and a further 5 million Syrian refugees hosted by its neighbours and the wider region.

2. The Syrian regime has the primary responsibility for the protection of the Syrian population. The Council therefore calls upon the regime and its allies, notably Russia including as a co-Chair of the ISSG, to undertake all efforts to ensure: a full cessation of hostilities; the lifting of sieges; and full unhindered sustainable country-wide humanitarian access. The Council strongly condemns the continued systematic, widespread and gross violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law by all parties, particularly by the Syrian regime. This must end and those responsible must be held accountable. The Council condemns the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare through the besieging of populated areas, as well as the forced displacement of populations, both of which may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. The EU will continue to consider further restrictive measures against Syria as long as the repression continues. The EU recalls that there can be no lasting peace in Syria under the current regime

3. The Council recalls that the conflict in Syria affects directly the EU and agrees on the need for the EU to develop a specific strategic framework for its approach to Syria as a country specific part of the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat adopted in March 2015. It therefore welcomes the Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission, and endorses the objectives as set out below. Together with these Conclusions, this forms the EU Strategy for Syria. The EU's strategic objectives in Syria are focussed in six key areas:

- a) **An end to the war through a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254, negotiated by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and with the support of key international and regional actors.**

The EU firmly believes that there can be no military solution to the conflict and is committed to the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Syrian State. Only a credible political solution, as defined in UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué will ensure the stability of Syria and enable a decisive defeat of Da'esh and other UN-designated terrorist groups in Syria. The EU continues to support the efforts of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh in Syria and Iraq.

The EU strongly supports the work of the UN Special Envoy and the resumption of the talks in Geneva. Reaffirming the primacy of the UN-led Geneva process, the EU will continue to provide political support to it through the High Representative's regional initiative which is fostering political dialogue with key actors from the region in order to identify common ground in the framework of the mandate given by the December European Council. The Council agrees to increase EU efforts to ensure both the full and effective participation of women and sustained consultation and dialogue with civil society in the political process.

Progress in Geneva will depend on efforts to reduce violence and build confidence on the ground. In this context, the Council recognises the contribution made to re-establish a full cessation of hostilities and notes the establishment of the trilateral mechanism in the Astana meetings to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire. It expresses serious concern at the continuing violence by terrorists, and from military actions against civilian and non-terrorist targets, including by the regime and its allies. The Council urges all sides to respect the ceasefire and calls on Russia, Turkey and Iran, to live up to their commitments as the guarantors, to ensure its full implementation. Further meetings in this context should achieve progress in securing full unhindered country-wide humanitarian access, the lifting of sieges and the release of all arbitrarily detained persons, especially women and children, in line with UNSCR 2268.

b) Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, through support for the strengthening of the political opposition.

The EU will continue to support the Syrian opposition and in particular the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) as the opposition delegation in the UN-brokered talks in Geneva. The EU will support the HNC's development of its vision of transition as well as the efforts it has made to consolidate the negotiating platform for the Syrian opposition.

The Council encourages the Syrian parties to engage constructively and without preconditions on the agenda set out by the UN Special Envoy and welcomes the positive approach adopted by the HNC, both in agreeing a more inclusive delegation and in setting out moderate and pragmatic proposals. The Council welcomed the HNC's integration of the Women's Advisory Committee and the progressive promotion of their full and effective participation. It urges the Syrian regime to lay out its own plans for a genuine inclusive political transition.

The political process must be fully inclusive to ensure that all segments of the Syrian society are involved in shaping Syria's future unity and reconciliation.

c) Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.

The EU expresses its continued grave concern at the deliberate restrictions that are put in the way of the provision of humanitarian aid and reiterates its call for full unhindered safe sustainable country-wide humanitarian access for the UN and other humanitarian organisations. Humanitarian access is not a confidence building measure but an obligation.

As the biggest funder of humanitarian efforts inside Syria, the EU will continue intensive humanitarian diplomacy and seek ways to improve access and protection as well as to promote humanitarian principles. The EU will continue to work to achieve full operation of the humanitarian exemptions and authorisations in its restrictive measures against Syria. The EU will also continue to support assistance to mine victims and mine risk education.

d) Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations.

The EU will continue to provide substantive support to Syrian civil society organisations, including to the work of the Civil Society Support Room and the Women's Advisory Board. Civil Society will need to play a prominent role in post-conflict Syria, and in helping the process of reconciliation. The Council agreed to increase EU efforts to promote free speech, including through supporting free and independent media.

e) **Promote accountability for war crimes with a view to facilitating a national reconciliation process and transitional justice.**

The EU will continue to work to help ensure accountability for war crimes, human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including the confirmed use of chemical weapons. The EU deplors in the strongest terms the systematic violations perpetrated in Syria, as documented by the UN established Independent International Commission of Inquiry, including the detailed survey on crimes committed last year in Aleppo. The Council supports the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations. The Council agrees to continue to gather information in view of future legal actions, including at the International Criminal Court, against all those responsible for breaches of international law. In this context, the Council expresses support to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism established for this purpose by the UN General Assembly and stresses the importance of providing sufficient resources for it to continue its vital work. The EU supports all efforts for national reconciliation and will continue to call for transitional justice.

The Council also condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and Da'esh confirmed in the reports of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, recalling its decision in March to adopt additional restrictive measures on individuals responsible. The Council supports all efforts in the identification of disappeared persons.

f) Support the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society.

The EU will continue to provide resilience support through the provision of education, job creation, support for local civilian governance structures in opposition held areas, including by working with the Syrian Interim Government, and work to avoid the collapse of the state administration. The EU will seek to increase assistance, combining cross-border assistance with support from inside Syria and will aim at delivering aid as part of a larger effort to address the needs of the population all across Syria, to prevent violent extremism and sectarianism and to build local resilience. The EU will not engage in early recovery/stabilisation efforts that could support social and demographic engineering.

4. The EU reiterates that it will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, negotiated by the Syrian parties in the conflict on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, is firmly under way. At that point, the Council will examine possible post-conflict assistance as detailed in the Joint Communication. In this context, the EU could review the current restrictive measures, engage in resuming co-operation with the transitional authorities, mobilise funds in support of post-war recovery and reconstruction, including cultural heritage, and use the appropriate tools under the EU Neighbourhood Policy and other programmes to tackle transitional challenges and stabilise communities through economic development. The EU is actively supporting the UN in its coordination of post-agreement civilian stabilisation planning and will work with the UN, International Financial Institutions and other donors. Special responsibility for the costs of reconstruction should also be taken by those who have fuelled the conflict.

5. The EU is conscious of the effects the Syrian conflict has on neighbouring states, and confirms its commitment to provide support to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Iraq and Egypt, who have demonstrated their commitment and resilience in hosting millions of Syrian refugees over the past few years. The Council commends these efforts and agrees on the need to maintain this support through the implementation of the EU-Jordan and EU-Lebanon Compacts and the EU-Turkey Statement as contributions towards reaching the respective London commitments for these countries.

6. The Council looks forward to the hosting of the Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" on 4-5 April 2017, following up the London conference of February 2016, the Kuwait pledging conferences of 2013-15, the Berlin and Helsinki Conferences of 2014 and 2017. The Conference will strengthen international support for the UN-led political process and will raise funding to meet the needs outlined in the UN-coordinated appeals as well as supporting the resilience of refugee-hosting countries. It notes that the EU Strategy serves as policy guidelines for the EU approach at the Conference."

Yemen

As the conflict in Yemen enters its third year, ministers addressed the political and humanitarian situation in the country, which continues to deteriorate. 17 million Yemenis depend on external aid for their survival, and 7.3 million are at serious risk of famine. The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. Recalling its Council Conclusions of 16 November 2015, the EU reaffirms its serious concern about the situation in Yemen. The ongoing conflict is having devastating consequences for the country and its population. In spite of the international pressure for a political solution to the crisis, the parties to the conflict have failed to reach a settlement and the fighting continues unabated. The number of civilian casualties continues to increase. Yemen's civilian infrastructure and institutions have been heavily affected by the war and are increasingly unable to deliver basic services. The humanitarian situation is catastrophic with 17 million food insecure Yemenis depending on external aid for their survival and 7.3 million people are at serious risk of famine. The situation is especially dire among children with over 2.2 million acutely malnourished. The dramatic economic downturn and the liquidity crisis further aggravate the dire situation.
2. Vulnerable groups, women and children are particularly affected by the on-going hostilities and the humanitarian crisis. The safety and well-being of women and girls is also of particular concern. The EU calls on all parties to the conflict to take all the necessary steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence including sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. The EU also strongly condemns the violations of the rights of the child and continued recruitment of child soldiers and is concerned at children's limited access to even basic health care and education.

3. The EU is likewise concerned at the consequences of the war in Yemen for the region's stability. The war has created the conditions for criminal and terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Da'esh in Yemen and others to thrive. The EU condemns all terror attacks in the strongest terms. The EU urges the Government of Yemen to assume its responsibilities in the fight against terrorist groups which are taking advantage of the current instability. It is particularly important that all parties to the conflict take resolute action against such groups, whose activities represent an additional threat to a negotiated settlement and pose significant risks to the security of the region and beyond. In addition, the conflict has resulted in an increase of incidents along Yemen's Red Sea coast, thus undermining freedom of navigation, endangering maritime trade in a crucial international shipping route.

4. There can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen. The crisis can only be solved through a negotiation process, involving all the parties concerned, with the full and meaningful participation of women, and leading to an inclusive political solution. In this framework, the EU reiterates its strong support to the efforts of the UN Secretary General and the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to achieve a resumption of negotiations and urges all parties to the conflict to react in a flexible and constructive manner and without preconditions to their efforts and fully and immediately implement all the provisions of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The implementation of confidence building measures such as immediate steps towards a sustainable ceasefire, a mechanism for a monitored withdrawal of forces, facilitation of humanitarian and commercial access and the release of political prisoners will be essential to facilitate a return to the political track. For this process to be successful, the EU calls on all parties to urgently agree on a cessation of hostilities to be monitored by the United Nations as a first step towards the resumption of peace talks under UN leadership. The EU also calls on all international and regional actors to engage constructively with Yemeni parties to enable a de-escalation of the conflict and a negotiated settlement that respects the independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen.

5. The EU strongly condemns attacks against civilians and renews its urgent call on all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including to respect the principles of distinction, proportionality, and to take precaution in the conduct of hostilities. The EU is deeply concerned by the impact of ongoing hostilities, including bombardments, use of cluster munitions and reported use of antipersonnel mines as well as by attacks causing the destruction of civilian infrastructure including schools, medical facilities, residential areas, markets, water systems, ports and airports. Ensuring accountability for violations is an important part of the process to achieve a lasting settlement of the current conflict. We continue to support independent investigations into all alleged violations and abuses, with a view to ending impunity for crimes committed by all parties to the conflict in line with HRC resolution A/HRC/33/L.5 and the EU General Comment. The EU calls on all parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the National Commission of Inquiry as well as with the enhanced OHCHR Yemen office and to allow them full access to all parts of Yemen. Both the final report by the National Commission of Inquiry as well as the written report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights including violations and abuses since September 2014, to be presented to the Human Rights Council in September, are essential ingredients for further discussions.

6. The EU reiterates the urgent need to remove obstacles and bureaucratic hurdles preventing the delivery of life-saving assistance and to facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction. The EU calls on state and non-state actors to ensure the safety and facilitate the secure access of relief workers and humanitarian personnel. In view of the dire humanitarian situation, access to all seaports is essential. Unfettered access must be guaranteed for commercial and humanitarian supplies. The EU urges the parties to ensure the full and effective functioning of Hodeida port and stresses its importance as a lifeline for humanitarian support and commercial access point for essential supplies. The EU stresses the importance of ensuring the effective and timely processing for commercial shipping,

including fuel, and fully supports the continuation of UNVIM (United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism) and the full and unhindered implementation of its mandate. The full support of the Coalition and the Government of Yemen is needed in order for UNVIM to operate effectively and at full capacity. The EU calls for a reopening of Sana'a airport for commercial flights so that urgently needed medicine and commodities can be flown in and Yemenis in need of medical treatment can be flown out. The EU calls for the full implementation of the targeted arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council. In this regard, the EU also reiterates the strict application of the rules set in the Common Position 2008/944 on arms exports. The EU urges all parties to facilitate the swift resumption of salary payments in the public sector in all of Yemen and of the fulfilment of the mandate of the Central Bank.

7. The EU is ready to increase its efforts to support UN actions in the search of a political settlement of this crisis by offering its good offices to the parties to reach a cessation of hostilities and start negotiations. The EU and its member states are also ready to step up humanitarian assistance to the population across the country according to the rising needs and to mobilize their development assistance to fund projects in crucial sectors. On that basis, the EU is committed to provide support to the parties in reaching a settlement to the conflict and to contribute to the country's future reconstruction. The EU stresses once again the need for a coordinate humanitarian action under UN leadership as reflected in this year's Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan and urges all countries to contribute to addressing humanitarian needs. The EU welcomes the high-level pledging conference for the crisis in Yemen that will take place on 25 April in Geneva co-hosted by the Secretary-General of the UN and the governments of Sweden and Switzerland. The EU and its Member States will step up their coordinated outreach to the conflict parties concerning the facilitation of humanitarian access and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Council will follow the developments in Yemen closely and stands ready to increase its engagement to promote stability and prosperity in Yemen once a political solution to the current conflict has been found. "

Libya

The Council discussed the situation in Libya. The High Representative debriefed ministers on the first Quartet meeting on Libya on 18 March 2017, in which she participated on behalf of the EU, joining the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States with the aim of finding a solution to the crisis in Libya. In the discussion, ministers underlined the EU's commitment to supporting Libyans in finding unity and stability for their country within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement.

Exchange of views with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States

EU foreign ministers had an exchange of views with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit. They discussed key issues for the region such as the situation in Syria and in Libya and Middle-East peace, and coordinated the position between the EU and the LAS. They also agreed to start preparations for a forthcoming first EU-LAS Summit.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Council conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council is deeply concerned at the ongoing and grave violations and abuses of human rights faced by so many children across the world. The EU recognises every child as a rights holder and seeks to promote the protection of the rights of the child throughout the world and to ensure respect for the best interests of the child in all policies affecting children. In light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development¹ and its guiding principle to "leave no one behind", the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants², and in line with the EU's commitment to mainstreaming human rights across all policy sectors in the context of EU external action reaffirmed in the Global Strategy³, the Council welcomes the revised Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (hereinafter 'the Guidelines'), which aim to strengthen efforts to ensure that children in the most marginalised and vulnerable situations are reached effectively by EU policies and action. The Council also recalls the Council Conclusions on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (December 2014)⁴ and the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (June 2008).

¹ *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 25 September 2015 (UNGA A/RES/70/1)

² New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, A/71/L.1*, 13 September 2016

³ Global Strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy
<https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>

⁴ The Council Conclusions on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (December 2014) primarily address EU internal policy.

2. The Council considers it important that these Guidelines promote a systems-strengthening approach by identifying all the necessary measures, structures and actors which need to be in place to protect all the rights of all children, including and especially those in the most vulnerable and marginalized situations, such as, but not limited to, internally displaced, migrant and refugee children, unaccompanied children, children with disabilities, children belonging to a minority group, those who live in poverty or in conflict and fragile situations, children deprived of their liberty or in conflict with the law, children deprived of education and children forced to work, victims of child, early and forced marriages and other harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation. This approach also takes into account the different gender and age based needs of girls and boys.
3. The EU will continue to actively engage in the processes leading to the elaboration of the Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact on Migration. In this context, the Council highlights the need to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children, regardless of their status, and give primary consideration at all times to the best interests of the child, including unaccompanied children and those separated from their families, in full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols; striving to provide refugee and migrant children with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities. The protection of children is mainstreamed in all segments of the European migration policy.

In line with the Guidelines, the Council in particular:

4. Reaffirms that the UNCRC and its three Optional Protocols; on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on a Communication Procedure, constitute the primary international standards in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The EU will continue to support and encourage partner countries to ratify and implement these instruments.
5. Underlines the indivisibility of the rights of the child as set out in the UNCRC and the primary consideration to be given to all four General Principles of the Convention; the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, the right to be heard, and the right to life, survival and development, which guide the implementation of all the other articles in the Convention.
6. Reaffirms the importance of promoting gender equality between all boys and girls by paying particular attention to addressing gender-based discriminations and violence, including sexual violence, and ensuring the empowerment of girls, because it is often girls who are left furthest behind. To this end the Council recalls the EU Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls and Combating all Forms of Discrimination against them.
7. Underlines the need to enhance children's ability to participate in decision-making and processes which concern them, in line with article 12 of the UNCRC and General Comment 12¹.
8. Recalls its Conclusions of 19 May 2014 on a rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights, and welcomes the promotion of a rights-based approach to systems-strengthening guided at all times by the UNCRC, as set out in these Guidelines.

¹ General Comment 12, the right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009

9. Acknowledges, in line with the European Commission proposal for a new European Consensus on Development¹, that the EU should further reinforce the mainstreaming of the rights of the child in all sectors and all programming and reinforce child-sensitive programming. With regard to EU funding programmes in EU external action, the Council invites the Commission and the EEAS to further roll out requirements that beneficiaries working directly with children have child safeguarding policies in place as a pre-condition for EU funding.
10. Recognises the need to support and encourage partner countries to adopt a national strategy on the rights of the child, based on a child rights- and gender sensitive analysis of the situation of children in the country. Subsequently, child sensitive national budgeting should be designed and implemented to make children visible in budgets, especially children in vulnerable situations².
11. Welcomes the importance given to encouraging and supporting partner countries to collect and use disaggregated data, which makes inequality and discrimination visible; by gender, age, income, disability and other factors, and provide information on marginalized, vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, inclusive governance and other issues, consistent with the EU's rights-based approach.

¹ Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development Our World, our Dignity, our Future, COM(2016) 740 final, 22 November 2016

² As stipulated in General Comment 19, CRC/C/GC/19, 2016, para 3, "children in vulnerable situations" are those who are particularly susceptible to violations of their rights, such as, but not limited to, children with disabilities, children in refugee situations, children from minority groups, children living in poverty, children in alternative care and children in conflict with the law.

12. Acknowledges the importance of encouraging and supporting partner countries to enact and review national legislation and related administrative guidance to ensure its compatibility with relevant international norms and standards on the rights of the child, in particular the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols as well as to develop and strengthen independent institutions on the rights of the child, including National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and/or ombudspersons for children and governmental mechanisms for coordinating action among government departments at all levels and between government and civil society.
13. The Council reaffirms its support to the work of relevant international and regional actors in the area of the rights of the child, in particular the UN organs and treaty bodies, particularly the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UN Special Procedures and mechanisms, in particular the Special Rapporteur on Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative on Violence against Children, and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.
14. The operationalisation of the Guidelines is a joint undertaking and a shared responsibility of EU institutions and Member States, in capitals and on the ground. The Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) will support the implementation while involving, when appropriate, other Council working groups. Regular exchanges of views will be held on the implementation, evaluation and review of these Guidelines. The Council calls on the High Representative to complement these general Guidelines with specific guidance to EU Delegations on issues such as child protection."

Council conclusions on Somalia

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union (EU) welcomes the conclusion of the electoral process in Somalia, the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo and the smooth hand-over of power. It also welcomes the swift formation of the Cabinet of ministers. It is now essential and urgent to start delivering on the multiple priorities Somalia has to address. Expectations among Somali citizens, Somalia's neighbours and all of its international partners are high. The EU affirms the need for continued political, economic and developmental support to build on achievements over the last years.
2. The EU recognises the 2016 electoral process was an important step, but highlights the importance of one-person, one-vote elections in 2020 and calls for an early start of the preparations of a credible political road-map to reach that objective. This road-map should include a process for tackling important issues that need to be resolved in the electoral law that should provide the legislative framework for the elections. It links to the need for serious steps in improving Rule of Law in Somalia including finalizing the constitutional review process. The EU highlights that recommendations made by the EU Election Expert Mission and other international missions could prove useful in that context.

The EU welcomes the increased representation of women in Parliament and the new Cabinet. The EU underlines the need to build on the gains already made and continue ensuring increased women's representation and participation in the Somali political process with a view to improving democratic inclusiveness, as well as the situation of women in the country.

3. The EU is alarmed by the unfolding humanitarian crisis due to the drought in the Horn of Africa, for which Somalia is particularly impacted. Out of the 6.2 million people in Somalia in need of food assistance, an estimated 2.9 million face crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity between now and the peak of the agricultural lean season in June; the level of food insecurity and AWD/cholera cases beyond this may remain high depending on the rains. In response, the EU has mobilised more than €140 million notably to drought specific humanitarian assistance in the Horn, including nearly €80 million for Somalia. Several EU Member States have also bilaterally committed significant humanitarian assistance. The new federal leadership must urgently confront the severe humanitarian consequences of the drought. The EU calls on the international community to scale up efforts to respond to the needs.

4. The new federal leadership faces crucial challenges as well as opportunities to build on the progress that has been made in recent years. The EU emphasises the urgency of ensuring security throughout the country by establishing a new nationally agreed and inclusive security architecture. It also calls for the new leadership to immediately address corruption and build credible institutions, in order to deliver key services to the Somali population, including in the areas of health and education. These are the preconditions for sustainable socio-economic development. The EU recalls that the new leadership must help drive a nationwide process of reconciliation. The EU welcomes President Farmaajo's commitment to all these objectives and calls upon both Houses of Parliament to work towards the same ends. The EU further emphasises the importance of strengthening governance and building a constructive relationship between the new national leadership and the leadership of the nascent federal member states.

5. In spite of progress achieved so far, the EU remains concerned by the security situation in Somalia. Security Sector Reform (SSR) is an urgent priority of the new government. Sustainable security will require Somalia to take progressive responsibility for its own national security. The federal government is currently developing a new security architecture. The EU encourages Somalia's central and regional administrations to negotiate with each other quickly and in a spirit of compromise and pragmatism, to agree a credible and inclusive political agreement on the security architecture that provides the basis for able, acceptable, accountable and sustainable Somali security forces which are representative of the entire nation. This work will require close coordination of all actors engaged in Somalia, including regional neighbours, in order to create one comprehensive security framework serving all people in Somalia. The EU commits to an integrated approach between its different instruments in its support to Somalia.

6. The EU supports and recognises AMISOM's essential role so far in maintaining security and containing Al-Shabaab. A Somalia owned security plan should also include the gradual, conditions-based, sustainable transfer of the responsibility of providing security from AMISOM to Somalia national forces from late 2018. The EU's support to AMISOM has been one of the key contributions to Somalia's progress in recent years. Its continued support needs to drive more effective action by AMISOM troops and capacity development of Somali security forces; the EU recalls the planned joint AU-UN review of the mission. It calls on international partners to join these efforts and contribute to AMISOM in view of ensuring its sustainable transition.

The EU is committed to supporting the development and operationalisation of the new security architecture and joint agreements between Somalia and the international community which will detail commitments and benchmarks. International coordination in the field of SSR support is equally important. In a wider effort, Somalia's neighbours

should be part of a broader collective security system that contributes to securing borders and economic development in the region. Security and stability on the mainland are beneficial for the safety and security of vessels in the region. The EU will continue supporting Somali efforts in the field of SSR also through EUTM Somalia and EUCAP Somalia. EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta has been successful in deterring the threat of piracy off the coast of Somalia. The Council welcomes ongoing discussions on EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta's key achievements in view of the upcoming strategic review.

7. The EU calls on the new Somali leadership to promptly finalise the constitutional review process, with a view to adopting a Constitution that is widely consulted and fully guaranteeing fundamental human rights, supports cooperation among the federal and regional administrations and defines clearly their respective responsibilities. At the federal level, the new Constitution should ensure a balance of power between the bicameral legislature, the President and the Federal Government. The constitutional review should be finalised well before the next presidential election.
8. The EU urges the government to resolutely address and continue the implementation of financial governance reforms at federal and regional levels to improve transparency and accountability of government finances with a view to increasing the confidence of the public as well as donors. Efforts should be made in facilitating economic recovery and in increasing domestic revenue. Efforts to strengthen public finance management are an important building block towards restoring normal relations with IFIs and eventual debt relief.

A New Partnership Agreement (NPA) between Somalia and the international community, building on the principles and experiences of the New Deal Compact, is essential for delivering tangible progress on security, political and development priorities for the next four years. The NPA is an excellent opportunity to highlight the ownership of the new Somali administration and should commit the Somali government to an ambitious set of reforms in the areas of security, governance, elections, Constitution, economic recovery and public financial management. It is equally an opportunity for international actors to better align political engagement, institutional support and financial assistance to a single framework of a Government of Somalia owned set of priorities. The principle of mutual accountability will be central to future relations between Somalia and its international partners. The EU welcomes the NPA outlining clear priorities and respective responsibilities. To this end, the EU has allocated an additional amount of €200 million under the EDF for the period up to 2020, beyond the €286 million already committed since 2014.

9. The EU remains deeply concerned by continued serious violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights law in Somalia, including violence against women and children and attacks against journalists. It is essential to bring those responsible to justice. The EU encourages the Federal Government to implement fully its Human Rights Roadmap adopted in August 2013 and to increase efforts in implementing its action plans on children and armed conflict, as well as to apply a moratorium on the death penalty. The EU also encourages the Somali authorities to enact the necessary legislation to operationalize its Human Rights Commission.

10. The EU stresses the need to build on lessons learned from the famine in 2011 and urge all donors and humanitarian actors to rapidly scale up the support. The EU underlines the importance of allowing the full and safe access of all humanitarian actors to all those in need of assistance, in line with international humanitarian aid principles, and underlines further the importance of full accountability in international support. A greater effort to improve the coordination is required to address the gaps in coverage and to secure access in locations beyond the current reach of the humanitarian community. Furthermore, long term resilience is crucial to end conflict and break the vicious cycle of drought and famine. In this regard, the EU encourages more collaborative efforts between humanitarian and development programmes, with the necessary respect for humanitarian actors' impartial mission and distinctive nature.

11. The EU welcomes the 25 March Special Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees in Nairobi. Its Declaration and accompanying Action Plan reflect the commitment by regional leaders to support a comprehensive integrated regional approach to deliver durable solutions for Somali refugees in safety and dignity whilst maintaining protection and promoting self-reliance in the countries of asylum, with the support of the international community and other stakeholders. The EU Trust Fund shall contribute to creating sustainable solutions for refugees and displaced populations.

12. Somalia faces challenges related to forced displacements and irregular migration, some of which are shared by the EU. Addressing them requires solidarity, determination, mutual commitment and genuine partnership. The EU stresses the need for a comprehensive dialogue on joint management of migration flows, building on the key elements of the Valletta Declaration, the Joint Valletta Action Plan and the work of the Khartoum Process, and calls on the new Somali leadership to address the cooperation with the EU on these as a political priority for the coming years.
13. The EU also welcomes the recent meeting in Addis Ababa between EU High Representative Mogherini and IGAD foreign ministers highlighting the strategic importance of the region and the EU's interest in the Horn of Africa, notably looking forward to effective security cooperation to which the EU could contribute. The EU furthermore stresses the need for a holistic perspective on the many interlinked challenges in the Horn of Africa.
14. Somalia, under a new political leadership, has the opportunity to create a better future. It is essential that the new administration shows true political resolve to address the urgent humanitarian and security situations in the country and works to bring tangible benefits to the people of Somalia, especially the youth. The EU reaffirms its willingness to support an accountable and responsible leadership delivering on commitments, promoting human rights and democratic values, and working for sustainable development and security in Somalia. The EU looks forward to the London Somalia Conference on 11 May 2017, co-chaired by the Federal Government of Somalia, the UN and the UK, as an opportunity to drive forward progress on this important agenda."

Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons

The Council adopted a decision supporting the UN Programme of Actions to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in All Its Aspects. This includes the aim of curbing the acquisition of military grade firearms by terrorists and thus reducing the impact of their attacks. The Council allocated a budget of € 798 million for the next two years to support the implementation of the programme.

The programme of action on small arms was adopted in an ad-hoc UN conference in 2001. Under the programme governments have agreed to improve national small arms laws, import/export controls and stockpile management, and to engage in cooperation and assistance. Joint action on the EU's contribution to this programme was adopted by the European Council on 12 July 2002 and reaffirmed by EU strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in 2005.

EU non-proliferation consortium of think-tanks

The Council extended its decision 2014/129/CFSP until 2 July 2017 in order to ensure the smooth continuation of the work of the EU non-proliferation consortium of think-tanks, based on the funds still available.

Restrictive measures in view of the situation in Yemen

The Council amended the restrictive measures in view of the situation in Yemen to transpose an update by the United Nations related to four persons subject to restrictive measures. The sanctions were introduced by the Council in December 2014. The sanctions are targeted against persons providing support for acts that threaten the peace, security or stability of Yemen.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU policy on training for Common Security and Defence Policy

The Council adopted a new EU policy on training for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Its main objective is to lay the ground for a culture of constant improvement, by addressing the particular training challenges of the constantly evolving CSDP. It clarifies priorities for the training of professionals directly involved with CSDP. With this policy update, the CSDP is adapting to shifting political, strategic and financial circumstances by deepening the shared understanding of the EU and its member states about how to put CSDP into practice.

2017 EU crisis management military exercise

The Council approved the exercise specifications for the EU crisis management military exercise in 2017 (MILEX17). The annual exercise will be conducted in November. This exercise is a part of the EU's crisis management and response policy. It will focus on the military planning process for the deployment of EU military forces and on the interaction between an EU operational headquarters and a force headquarters. Other partners such as NATO, the United Nations or the United States of America will be invited to observe the exercise.

APPOINTMENTS

Judge to the General Court

On 29 March 2017, the member states' representatives appointed Mr Colm Mac Eochaidh (Ireland) as judge to the General Court for a mandate ending on 31 August 2019 ([6398/17](#)).

The appointment is part of the second stage of the reform of the General Court and follows the transfer of seven posts of judges from the former Civil Service Tribunal.

More information on the [reform of the General Court](#)